INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this procedure is to provide guidance for the handling, collection and submission of evidence within the guidelines and protocols set forth by PBSO 532.00 and 532.01. This procedure shall apply to CSU Personnel assigned to the Crime Scene Unit, Technical Services Division.

General Considerations

CSU Personnel should establish a secure area within close proximity of the scene for the purpose of evaluation, equipment staging, and evidence storage in accordance with the PBSO 532.00 and 532.01 General Orders located on the PBSO Portal. If for some unforeseen circumstance any of the crime scene unit manuals cannot be followed, the deviation shall be documented in the crime scene notes and reports. The CSU Managers shall be notified. CSU Personnel shall evaluate all safety issues and weather conditions that may affect the way the scene is processed (i.e., blood, and other hazards). Refer to 5.2 of the QAM.

CSU Personnel shall not smoke, chew tobacco, eat, drink, litter or spit within the boundaries of the crime scene. Refer to 5.2 of the QAM.

Only validated methods shall be used by the CSU.

When processing evidence, sufficient space between items shall be allotted to prevent cross contamination. The examination tables shall be cleaned with disinfectant before and after each use. The work spaces in the CSPR shall be covered with a new piece of kraft paper for protection from contaminants on the tables. Items being stored in the CSPR lockers shall be properly secured in paper evidence bags to prevent cross contamination. Items in transport shall be secured in paper evidence bags or boxes when practical to prevent cross contamination. If items are capable of spilling out of their containers, they shall be sealed with evidence tape.

CSU Personnel shall utilize universal precautions when collecting, handling and packaging all evidence. Refer to 5.8 of the QAM.

Universal Evidence Collection Procedures

The evidence collection sequence shall be based on:

- The scene location: interior, exterior, within a vehicle or other location
- The fragile or stable condition of the evidence
- Weather conditions which might affect the scene, or evidence contained within the scene
- Scene management problems which may contribute to alteration or contamination of the evidence
CSU Personnel shall utilize the appropriate equipment when collecting evidence. The following equipment is provided and shall be used in the evidence collection process as required. This list is not all inclusive.

- Nitrile gloves
- Tweezers
- Scalpels
- Swabs
- Paper bags
- Plastic bags
- Cardboard boxes
- Kraft paper (brown paper)
- Hand tools

The CSU Personnel shall make sure that all items of evidence ready for collection have been photographed in situ when possible and documented in notes when photography of the evidence in situ is not possible.

Visually examine items for any trace evidence. Handle items carefully to avoid any loss of trace evidence. Collect fragile trace evidence before transporting.

Evidence collected from a crime scene shall be packaged in such a way as to protect it from loss, cross transfer, contamination and/or deleterious change.

Evidence may be transported to any of the CSU secured facilities in a sealed or unsealed container and shall be maintained in a secured area.

Upon returning to the CSU, the evidence shall be documented, processed, and packaged as soon as practical. The case number shall be written on all proximal containers, including coin envelopes or smaller bags inside a larger evidence bag, or identifying tags before evidence is secured in a locker or other secure storage location. The evidence shall be appropriately identified on the proximal container or identifying tag and on the property receipt. After documentation and/or processing of the item is complete, it shall be sealed in an appropriate container with evidence tape. Items too large for packaging may be sealed with kraft paper and evidence tape. Items may also be unpackaged with an attached identifying tag, only if the items have already been processed or will not need processing.

For evidentiary items that are turned over to CSU personnel in a sealed container for processing (example: in-house processing submissions), any inner packaging shall be retained and resealed within the original outer evidence packaging even if the inner packaging is not being processed.

**Evidence Seals and Labels**

Non-bulk evidence items where the processing has been completed, shall be placed in a container to protect it from loss, cross-transfer, or contamination and shall be stored under proper lock or seal. This policy applies to various types of packaging containers, including evidence bags and boxes and all coin envelopes. CSU Personnel are assigned individual lockers within the
CS Evidence Handling Collection and Transportation

CSPR. If the item cannot be secured in the assigned locker, the evidence will be placed into a proximal container which shall be sealed while ensuring that attempted entry into the container is detectable. A proper seal may include but is not limited to, a heat seal, evidence tape seal, or a lock with the initials/signature or markings of the person creating the seal being placed across the seal and onto the container when possible. All containers holding biological items shall be labeled as bio-hazardous with orange bio-hazard labels. The accompanying property receipt/chain of custody shall also be marked as such. Bulk items which do not require additional examination or analysis may be labeled with a tag.

Evidence Storage

Evidence requiring storage under special environmental conditions shall be accommodated. A refrigerator/freezer designated only for items of evidentiary value and chemicals is located in the CSPR for temperature sensitive items. A non-human blood standard is also stored in the CSPR refrigerator. The refrigerator is equipped with an alarm if it becomes inoperable. A fire hazard cabinet is located in the chemical room in the CSPR for flammable items. A firearm safe is located in the CSPR for all firearms that have not been rendered safe. Derivative evidence shall be maintained and stored to the same extent as original items of evidence.

All evidence not in the process of examination shall be maintained in any of the secured, limited-access CSU locations.

Sealed or unsealed evidence may be left unattended in the secure, limited access CSU locations for brief periods of time. Unsealed and unattended evidence in the process of being worked shall be covered with Kraft paper to prevent contamination and/or cross contamination. Non-bulk items that are in the process of being worked shall be secured in an assigned evidence locker at the end of each shift. If evidence in the process of being worked cannot be submitted or secured in the appropriate locker, it then may be covered by Kraft paper and labeled with Do Not Molest or similar verbiage and placed under proper seal. The item shall be transported to the Evidence Unit as soon as practical.

If unsealed evidence items are received by CSU personnel from a detective/deputy on behalf of another CSI or EPT, the items shall be secured in the CSPR or another secure, limited access CSU location. The items will be placed on brown kraft paper and labeled with Do Not Molest or similar verbiage and the name of the CSI/EPT responsible for the evidence and placed under proper seal. The CSI/EPT that is responsible for the evidence shall secure the items in their locker and/or transport them to the Evidence Unit as soon as practical.

Timeframe for Work in Progress

In order for evidence to be considered “work in progress”, the CSI or EPT shall be in the process of examining the evidence. The timeframe is based upon justifiable expectation of frequent examination. The time frame for evidence submission shall not exceed 30 days without prior authorization from a manager. The request for an extension shall be sent to a manager via email. If the CSI or EPT has a heavy work load, they shall notify the appropriate manager. The timeframe shall be based on actual frequency of examination and/or a reasonable period of anticipated examination, or current workload.
Collection of Special Evidence

- Potential Biological Stains
- Bedding
- Cigarette Butts
- Clothing
- Condoms
- Digital Media
- Fingerprints
- Firearms/Ammunition
- Additional Firearms Related Evidence
- Fire Debris
- Oral DNA Standards
- Hair Standards
- Knives and Miscellaneous Weapons
- Liquids
- Currency, Jewelry and Watches
- Illicit Drugs
- Prescription Medications
- Dive Equipment

Potential Biological Stains

Stains observed with an alternate light source should be circled or marked with a permanent marker to document their location. Depending on the condition of the stain (wet or dry) and the substrate, the stain can be collected by: swabbing, scraping with a sterile scalpel, or submitted in its entirety. If a wet stain is observed on fabric at the scene, preserve the stain by placing a layer of brown paper or paper bags between the folds to prevent transfer.

Bedding

Collect only items in direct contact with the participants (if this can be established). The orientation of the item shall be labeled with a marker (i.e., head, foot, top, and bottom) prior to collection. Fold the item inward to prevent any loss of trace evidence. Place each item separately into a paper bag.

Cigarette Butts

Place cigarette and cigar butts in separate paper bags or envelopes. Do not include the ashes.

Clothing

Collect the entire article of clothing. Items of clothing should be packaged in separate paper bags. If the items of clothing are observed in a single pile, they may be packaged together as one item.
If a bloodstain pattern is observed on clothing at the scene, preserve the bloodstains by placing a layer of brown paper or paper bags between the clothing folds.

**Condoms**

Any condom submitted shall be classified as biohazardous and unsafe to handle, unless it is submitted properly.

All condoms not sealed in its original factory packaging shall be placed individually into a sterile plastic conical. The plastic conical shall be stored in the CSPR refrigerator until final packaging and submission to the CL Evidence Unit. The plastic conical shall be packaged in a paper evidence bag and secured in the refrigerated storage locker at the CL Evidence Unit.

**Digital Media**

Digital media card(s) and digital video recording(s) related to homicides and police involved shootings shall be submitted to the Evidence Unit within 24 hours after the scene has been cleared. Photography media card(s) and video recording(s) media related to all other cases shall be submitted to the Evidence Unit before the CSI or EPT enters into their scheduled days off. See *CS Photography* and *CS Videography and Wireless Video Protocol* documents.

**Fingerprints**

Fingerprint and palm print standards are collected for the purpose of elimination / comparison to unidentified latent and patent prints. CSU personnel may be requested to obtain fingerprint and/or palm print standards from victims, suspects, and witnesses. Consent from the contributor, either verbal or written, or a search warrant shall be obtained prior to the collection. CSU personnel may use black printer's ink and a fingerprint roller or an inkless fingerprint pad to record the ridge characteristics of a particular individual on a fingerprint card.

Refer to the *CS Developing Latent Prints* document for information about processing evidentiary items for latent fingerprints.

**Firearms**

Firearm safety is vital at any crime scene. Firearms shall be rendered safe before submission to the Evidence Unit. When a firearm is recovered at a crime scene that is being investigated by the Violent Crimes Division (VCD), a detective, deputy, or other law enforcement personnel will unload the firearm. For all other non-VCD investigations, the CSU personnel can unload the firearm and render it safe. All firearms shall be double checked for safety. In the event firearm(s), casing(s) and projectile(s) are associated to a homicide, an officer involved shooting, or a task force case, they shall be submitted to the CL within 72 hours or prior to the end of CSU personnel’s work week. It shall be at the discretion of the lead detective if an expedient submission of firearms evidence is needed.
If not completed by law enforcement personnel, CSU personnel shall query recovered firearms through Teletype and record the control number, hit information (if applicable), and teletype operator’s ID number, along with the other pertinent firearm and case information on the gun box. When CSU personnel queries a firearm through Teletype, the description will be entered in the Offense System by the CSU Clerical Specialist. Refer to the *CS Crime Scene Reports and Case Files* document for additional information about Offense System entries for firearms.

Projectiles and fragments contaminated by biological material must be cleaned with disinfectant and a soft bristle brush or swab prior to packaging. Note that any swabs for the possible presence of DNA must be collected from the firearm evidence before the items are cleaned with disinfectant.

**NOTE**: Fragile or easily lost trace evidence observed on weapons, (i.e., blood, hair, fibers, DNA, etc.) should be collected before transportation to the CSPR whenever possible.

**NOTE**: All firearms collected from water (or submerged in another liquid) shall be transported to headquarters in a receptacle containing water/liquid from the same source whenever possible.

**General Firearm Safety**

Never attempt to render a firearm safe if it is not familiar to you. A firearm examiner or law enforcement personnel may be contacted for assistance. A gun safe is available in the CSPR to secure firearms temporarily until they can be rendered safe if you need assistance clearing them. The CSI/EPT that secures items in the gun safe shall retain the gun safe key until the weapons have been cleared and removed from the safe.

Never point the barrel of the weapon in the direction of anyone.

When collecting a firearm, pick the weapon up by the grip. Never move a firearm using a foreign object inside the barrel or trigger guard. This is unsafe and can damage potential evidence.

If a revolver is cocked (hammer back), carefully let the hammer down.

Semi-automatic and automatic pistols found at crime scenes are more likely to be found in a cocked position than revolvers. Use extreme caution and the following guidelines when handling these types of weapons. Note the position of any manual safety devices and/or de-cocking levers. If the pistol is cocked (hammer back), carefully let the hammer down by manipulating the trigger while holding the hammer spur. Carefully disengage the magazine and remove it from the weapon. Open the action and visually check the chamber for a live cartridge or spent cartridge casing.

When handling a shotgun or rifle equipped with a tube feed, use extra caution to make sure the tube is completely empty before any further examination of the weapon.
General Firearm Documentation and Packaging

The following guidelines should be used when collecting a revolver:

Before opening the cylinder make two marks using a marker, one on each side of the top strap. These marks shall indicate which cylinder is under the firing pin.

Record the number of cylinders.

Document which cylinders are loaded and which are empty.

Note the brand of ammunition in each cylinder.

Document the ammunition condition (i.e., fired, unfired, live, spent).

Place the live ammunition in a paper evidence bag or envelope and the spent ammunition in a separate bag/envelope.

The following guidelines should be used when collecting other firearms besides a revolver:

Document the position of any manual safety devices and/or de-cocking levers. Remove any cartridges from the chamber and magazine (if applicable), record the condition (i.e. live, spent) and brand of ammunition, and place them in a paper evidence bag or envelope.

NOTE: The magazine may be packaged with the gun, provided it was collected with the firearm. If not, it should be packaged separately.

NOTE: All firearms shall be zip tied in a new gun box before submitting to the Evidence Unit. If the firearm is too large to fit inside a long gun box (i.e., rifles, shotguns), multiple paper evidence bags or brown kraft paper shall be used to completely wrap and protect the weapon prior to submission to the Evidence Unit.

Ammunition

Unfired ammunition, also known as live rounds, and fired ammunition, also known as casings or cartridge casings, shall be sealed in separate labeled coin envelopes. The following information shall be written on the envelopes: case number, date recovered, investigator’s name or initials and a description of the items to include the head stamp information and evidence stanchion number/letter if applicable.

Large quantities of ammunition collected together, or in the same area, may be grouped together as a single item.

NOTE: It is not necessary to mark individual pieces of ammunition since the proximal container (coin envelope) should be labeled with the pertinent information.
Additional Firearms Related Evidence

Physical items of evidence such as clothing, walls, doors, etc… may be collected as items of evidence for pattern analysis and distance examinations as needed.

Fire Debris

The CSU does not routinely collect fire debris. Most fire evidence is collected by the Fire Rescue personnel or PBSO Arson Investigators.

CSU Personnel shall assist the arson investigator with photography, latent print processing, DNA processing and sketching when requested.

If fire debris or samples need to be collected by the CSI, new, lined metal paint cans shall be used as the collection container.

Collection of Oral DNA Standards

Oral DNA standards are collected for the purpose of elimination / comparison to unidentified DNA profiles. Consent from the contributor, either verbal or written, or a search warrant shall be obtained prior to the collection. It is preferred that the individual performs the swabbing of the interior of their own facial cheeks with a pair of dry sterile cotton swabs. The swabs will be sealed in a labeled coin envelope with a bio hazard sticker on the envelope, evidence bag and property receipt. The following information shall be written on the envelope: case number, date recovered, investigator’s name or initials and a description of the item. Each oral DNA standard must be sealed in a separate evidence bag.

Hair Standards

Hair standards are collected from victims, witnesses, and suspects for comparison with recovered evidence. A signed consent to search or warrant shall be obtained by a deputy or detective prior to the collection.

The collection can be performed by CSU personnel or by the subject of the collection. The collection can be performed with a gloved hand or clean tweezers with a gloved hand.

Approximately 30 - 40 head hair standards, which shall include the root, shall be collected from the following areas, when available:

- Front
- Back
- Left side
The hairs shall be placed in folded plain paper or filter paper and packaged within separate labeled coin envelopes. The following information shall be written on the envelopes: case number, date recovered, investigator’s name or initials and a description of the items. Oral DNA standards shall be packaged separately and placed on a separate property receipt from any hairs / fibers recovered.

If available, CSU personnel of the same gender as the subject shall be present for the collection of pubic hairs.

Auxiliary hairs are those hairs from other areas of the body (e.g. beard, arm, leg or chest). Hairs from these areas are case specific and are not routinely collected. Collection from these areas is at the discretion of the lead detective or deputy.

Knives and Miscellaneous Weapons

Cover the sharp edge(s) with a protective barrier (i.e., cardboard, multiple layers of paper, etc) to help prevent injury only after the item has been processed for DNA and/or latent prints. If applicable, examine the weapon for trace evidence and collect it if located.

Place the sharp object in a new labeled sharps container, paper bag, or knife box before transportation to the CSPR.

NOTE: “SHARP OBJECT” or similar verbiage may be displayed on the proximal container as handwritten or commercially printed on the packaging.

Liquids

The liquid may be swabbed, obtained with a new pipette and vial, or poured into a vial depending on the quantity of the liquid.

If the liquid shall be swabbed, two dry swabs shall be used. The swabs shall be placed into a new coin envelope for collection. The following information shall be recorded on the envelope: case number, date recovered, investigator’s name or initials and a description of the item. The swabs shall be air dried prior to final packaging.

The liquid contained in the pipette should then be expelled into a new vial, tube, or other suitable liquid container. A label documenting the case number, date of collection, investigator’s name or initials and description of where the sample was obtained from should be attached to the container before being submitted to the CL.

If the liquid is in a drinking glass or other rigid container, an investigator may pour a sample of the contents into a new vial. A label documenting the case number, date of collection,
investigator’s name or initials and description of where the sample was obtained from should be attached to the container before being submitted to the CL.

**Currency, Jewelry and Watches**

PBSO GO 532.00 shall be followed.

Valuables that are collected shall be photographed by CSU personnel.

The amount of currency shall be counted and verified by a witness (i.e., detective, deputy or CSU Personnel).

The money shall be turned over to the Evidence Section.

**Illicit (Non-prescription) Drugs**

CSU Personnel shall not collect illicit drugs. It is the responsibility of the detective or uniformed officer to secure illicit drug evidence. However, illicit drugs may be found in clothing or other items after being transported to the crime scene processing room. When this happens use the following guidelines for handling illicit drugs.

Illicit drug residue can be swabbed using two sterile cotton tip swabs dampened with distilled water.

The swabs shall be packaged into a coin envelope, secured properly for transport and submitted to the Crime Laboratory Evidence Section. The following information shall be written on the envelope: case number, date recovered, investigator’s name or initials and a description of the item.

Place illicit drugs in clear plastic bags.

Seal the bag(s) with evidence tape.

Label the bag(s) with case number, date recovered, investigator’s name or initials and a description of the item.

Illicit drugs shall be documented on a separate property receipt. The property receipt and evidence bag shall reflect the total package weight (TPW). The total package weight may be obtained using a balance in the CSPR or in the CL evidence section.

Wet illicit drugs should be air-dried before packaging.

**NOTE:** Use extreme caution when handling syringes. Syringes with exposed needles shall be packaged into a labeled “Sharps” container.
Prescription Medications

PBSO General Order 532.00 shall be followed.

All medication quantities that have been hand counted shall be verified by a witness. A pill count is not required for non-criminal / unsuspicious death investigations. The total package weight and / or pill count, pill description and pill bottle label information shall be recorded in the notes or on the CS Medication Record form available on the PBSO Document Control Center and shall be initialed by CSU Personnel and the person verifying if hand counted. A copy of the form(s) shall be given to the assigned detective and the PBCMEO investigator upon request.

An electronic pill counter, located in the CSPR, may be used to tally quantities of pills. The counter has demonstrated it will recognize fragment / pieces if greater than 25% of the whole pill therefore only whole pills will be run through the counter. Partial pills will not be run through the counter to avoid an inaccurate total. Partial pills need only to be recorded as such on the property receipt without a quantity (Example – 25 pills and fragments). The operation manual and cleaning instructions are located with the equipment and electronically. The electronic pill counter shall be performance checked on an annual basis.

The weights of the bottles and/or total package weight may be obtained using a balance in the CSPR or in the CL evidence section. The weights shall be recorded on the property receipt and evidence bag.

In death investigation cases where an overdose is suspected, a representative pill of each type shall be photographed to document the markings with the container’s label.

Dive Equipment

When CSU Personnel responds to a death investigation involving scuba equipment, whether the decedent is still on scene or has been transported to the hospital, it will be the responsibility of the CSI to document and ensure that all pertinent dive gear is transported to headquarters. The gear (tank/regulator/BC/dive computer) will be itemized on a PBSO property receipt and labeled with a toe tag. The gear will be submitted to the Medical Examiner’s Office as soon as practicable.

The Medical Examiner Investigator does not need fins, masks, knives, wrist watches (unless they also function as the dive computer) or weight belts. If collected by CSU Personnel, these items will be submitted to PBSO Evidence Unit.

The gear should be completely photographed. If you hear the airflow, the valve position will be marked with a sharpie and the pressure gauge photographed to show the indicated tank pressure before turning it off. If it is necessary to close the tank valve, the number of turns needed to perform that should be recorded. The dive computer should not be manipulated. Photograph the computer screen as in some cases, once the battery dies the data is lost and cannot be recovered.
The Medical Examiner’s Office is responsible for facilitating the examination of the dive gear. Once the examination is complete the gear will be returned to PBSO.

**Property Receipts**

A property receipt shall be maintained from the time the evidence was received and shall reflect all internal and external transfers. The receipt shall detail each person taking possession of an item of evidence at the time of transfer. This applies to all hand to hand transfers and placement of evidence in drop boxes and lockers. If a vehicle is towed from a scene and secured in the Impound Lot by a CSI after hours, the CSI shall record this evidence storage location on the first line of the chain of custody section at the bottom of the PBSO Vehicle Storage Receipt. If a vehicle is towed and secured in the Crime Scene Garage, the CSI shall record this evidence storage location on the first line of the chain of custody section at the bottom of the PBSO Vehicle Storage Receipt. If an investigator other than the original impounding CSI processes a vehicle secured in the garage, a notation shall be made in the chain of custody section to reflect which CSI processed the vehicle. When the vehicle is subsequently moved from the garage to the Impound Lot, the CSI overseeing the moving of the vehicle shall record the transfer to the Impound Lot on the next line of the chain of custody.

At a minimum, the property receipt shall include:

- PBSO case number
- A description of the evidence
- Chain of custody
- A signature, written or electronic, of the person submitting the evidence

Evidence collected from, but not limited to, the PBCMEO, a deputy or a detective shall have an accompanying completed property receipt.

The employee that takes the sealed evidence containers placed on the cart in the processing room for transport to the Evidence Unit shall sign the property receipt and become part of the chain of custody. The employee that chooses to leave evidence on the cart retains responsibility of that evidence until it reaches its intended location.

The evidence shall be handled according to the same procedures set forth for evidence collected at a crime scene.

Electronic chain of custody using secure electronic signatures is the preferred method for completing transfers for evidence that has already been entered into Justice Trax (for example: in-house processing submissions and impounded vehicles). All secure electronic transfers shall be done in real time. The CSU follows the guidelines in the Quality Assurance Manual for electronic chain of custody.

**Evidence Received from the Medical Examiner’s Office**
The CSU is notified by the PBCMEO when items of evidence need to be picked up. The CSU Manager notifies the CSU Personnel via email or other means of communication when evidence is ready for pick-up. The sealed items shall be collected on a PBCMEO property receipt and transported to the CSPR. The lead CSI shall be notified of the evidence collected and the location of the evidence. Tubes of blood shall be stored in the refrigerator. DNA standard cards do not require refrigeration. Drying cabinets and a drying room are available to CSU personnel to air dry wet items.

It is the responsibility of the lead CSI to ensure that the evidence was transported, properly stored and submitted to the appropriate unit in a timely manner.

**Mailing Evidence**

Evidence may be mailed to and from both local and non-local law enforcement agencies as well as laboratories and individuals external to the CSU. Refer to PBSO General Order 532.01

Evidence sent by mail shall be properly packaged, sealed and documented. Evidence shall be mailed via a commercial traceable carrier and clearly addressed to the Evidence Section or CSU Personnel. Inventory of package contents shall occur prior to formal submission of the evidentiary item(s).

The date and time of package receipt shall be documented on the appropriate chain of custody document(s) (written and/or electronic) as well as the method of delivery (for example: via US mail, via UPS, via FedEx) and the receiving individual’s name prior to evidence transfer to a second individual or storage location.

Chain of custody documents both written and electronic shall be completed and copies maintained with the case file.

**Sub-division of evidence**

When evidence is subdivided, the sub-items shall be tracked through a documented chain of custody record to the same extent that original items of evidence are tracked. When an item has been sub-divided for analysis and reporting, its’ unique submission number shall be maintained.